OPINION

the Astorian
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Founded in 1873

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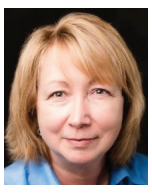
PUBLISHER'S NOTEBOOK

Digital improvements a benefit

Years ago, a friend retiring from a longtime job as library director told me she wasn't interested in leading the transformation to the digital era.

I didn't understand her reluctance. I thought it was exciting to be able to reach people with local news and information without the limitations of two-dimensional paper and ink, or geographic restrictions based on paper delivery.



KARI BORGEN

It is, however, daunting work. Moving from paper and ink to digital required creating a different mindset with new workflows and deadlines. Changing from print-centric information to digital products meant learning and teaching new skills, educating subscribers and a lot of trial and error.

One of the most frustrating parts of our evolving digital delivery has been the cumbersome online registration system for subscribers. To view The Astorian news online or the e-edition of the newspaper, subscribers have had to register on the website and then register again in our subscription system.

On Monday, we changed that.

If you're already using our online news portal, you've received several emails that asked you to re-register your account in our new system. One click on the link, create a new password and you're done. If you are a print subscriber who hasn't created an online account, the online dailyastorian.com news and e-newspaper is included in your subscription price. It's easier now to take advantage of that benefit. Look for the "account" link in the upper right corner, click and register an account.

If you have problems, our customer service center can help you. Call them at 800-781-3214.

There is additional value available exclusively online: videos, photo galleries, an audio player that reads stories to you — in English, Spanish, French, German, Chinese or Italian. There are online puzzles, local advertising and business links, an online event calendar for the area and an area guide directory.

We aren't constrained by pages or a print deadline, so news is posted online as it happens, with more photos and links to related stories and websites. Breaking news alerts can be delivered directly to your phone, and download our mobile apps to view your news without opening a browser.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Readers have new options to subscribe to The Astorian with print and digital delivery.

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The new registration system brings other changes for nonsubscribers. After viewing two stories, a nonsubscriber will be asked to register an account to provide access to three more stories. Access is limited unless you're a subscriber after five stories viewed in a month.

For nonsubscribers who are angry that they can't read dailyastorian.com for free, I'd like to remind them that a subscription doesn't pay for a newspaper to be delivered. It pays employees for sitting through public meetings, doing research, making phone calls, verifying facts and conducting interviews to get quotes on the record.

It pays for photographers who record the people, places and events of our area in visual stories.

A subscription pays for access to years of archives representing local history and images gathered over the years by journalists bound by professional ethics and principles. The work that those journalists do is paid for by you — subscribers who value credible local news and the connections it makes for our community to the people who live here.

The Astorian's digital-only subscriptions now account for 21% of our total subscriptions as compared to just 7% five years ago. More improvements to online subscription products are planned for the upcoming year, including combination subscriptions with other local news organizations, additional e-newsletter offerings and local deals.

Last year, our digital subscriptions increased by over a third, even with our cumbersome registration system. Even as we adapt to the digital information landscape, our mission remains constant: To report and distribute credible, trusted local news and information because a well-informed public keeps our communities strong.

Subscribers — digital and print — are the backbone of our business. Have a suggestion or idea to share? Contact me at kborgen@dailyastorian.com

Kari Borgen is publisher of The Astorian.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wake up

Is there no hope for our population struggling with mental health? It is becoming Clatsop County's dirty little secret — brushed under the rug by society, creating an ever-growing issue that needs immediate action.

We cannot continue to ignore the fact that people with mental health issues make up the greatest percentage of our homeless population, as well as our incarcerated population. We need to recognize that these people are struggling with real mental health issues that, if addressed and treated properly, our society as a whole will be better off.

The general attitude of our community is that people who are homeless or have mental health issues are not their problem, if they don't know someone personally who struggles with these issues.

We have to take a serious look at what is happening, and why. Granted, some people don't want help, but most likely it is because they don't think, or know, they need it. We need to look at each person with mental health issues individually, and get them properly diagnosed to better help them.

Stop mass grouping them together as "crazy homeless people," and take the time to actually help them get to mentally healthy, in place of mentally unstable. Their mental health issues are our issues.

Wake up people, it's time to start acting, instead of reacting.

MELISSA CUMBESS
Gearhart

Endangered murrelets

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission deserves only mild applause for finally granting the marbled murrelet endangered status under state law.

Listed as threatened 25 years ago, the murrelets have been hanging on by their tiny beaks as thousands of acres of their old growth habitat has been clearcut on state land in the Coast Range.

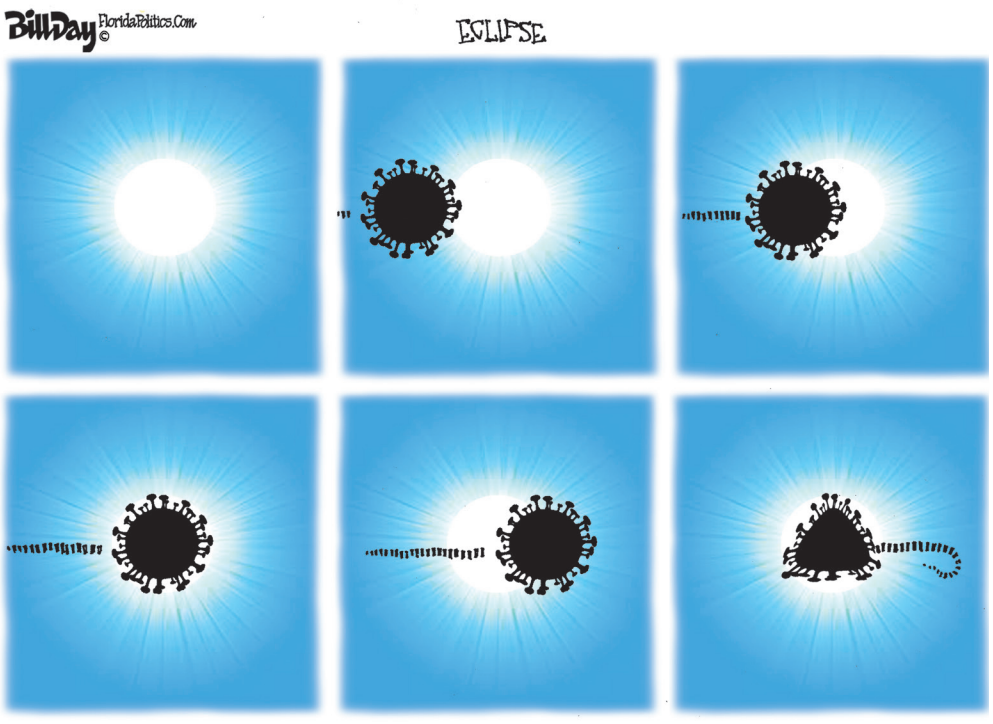
Real thanks goes to the environmental groups that petitioned the commission to uplist the bird from threatened status. The commission accepted their petition and began drawing up protection guidelines.

Under intense pressure from the timber industry and political leaders — who can't come up with idea No. 1 on how to fund county services without cutting down what's left of our state forests — the commission reversed its decision without explanation.

An Oregon judge ruled that failing to give an explanation was a violation of state law. So here we are, two years later, when the commission could no longer ignore the science, and many peer reviews demonstrated that the murrelets need increased protection, due primarily to clearcutting of their old growth habitat.

It doesn't seem like it should have taken 25 years to figure this one out. In order to make murrelet protection guidelines a reality, the commission's work with other state agencies to will have to be carefully scrutinized.

ROGER DORBAND
Astoria



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at bit.ly/astorianletters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

Junkie's paradise

'Gabe," Warrenton's police dog, deserves a long and loving retirement.

But readers should understand there is no longer any effective way for police officers to interdict even large quantities of drugs like heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl.

When out-of-state billionaires funded Measure 110, it effectively legalized all drugs. Technically, it is a violation less serious than having a dirty license plate to have 39 oxycontin and a syringe, but even larger amounts are just misdemeanors.

But tools like Gabe, who could alert on the presence of such drugs, are now legally useless. No dog can tell us how much drug is present, and since it is no longer a crime to have a gram of methamphetamine, the fact that it is present does not give rise to probable cause.

We cracked down on prescription drugs in about 2010, but the overdoses are now coming from bootleg fentanyl and meth.

We stopped worrying about marijuana years ago, but Oregon is now a junkie's paradise. Ask any cop, emergency room nurse or drug counselor you know: "Is the problem improving or getting better?"

JOSHUA MARQUIS
Clatsop County district attorney, retired
Astoria